



Advent-Christmas 2016

Die Gute Nachricht

Die Evangelisch-Lutherische St. Matthäusgemeinde

The Good News

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church



Dear Members and Friends,

What are we waiting for?

‘Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!’ Psalm 27:14, NRSV

There is an estimate that people spend about six months of their lives just waiting in line. Add to that 43 days waiting for customer service on the phone, and 27 days waiting for buses or trains. Waiting for the security line at the airport to move along adds a few more days. So on average we spend 9 months of our lives just waiting. Funny to think that we wait as much as it takes to form a human being in the womb...

In any case, we wait around a lot. But then our whole existence seems to revolve about waiting: waiting for the school year to end (or to start), waiting for vacation time to finally come around, waiting for Prince or Princess Charming, waiting for the promotion at work, waiting for healing, waiting for circumstances to change, waiting for times to get better/easier/more relaxed...there always seems to be something else we are longing or striving for.

As people of faith, we are people in waiting. We wait for the Lord, we wait for the Messiah, we wait for the divine power to enter our lives and our world and turn everything upside down – for we only know too well that our lives and our world are far from perfect, that there is destruction and suffering and mindlessness and the lack of love. This country right now is in turmoil, and many feel frightened by current politics. No, this is not the world we hope and long for. We know we cannot find salvation in a world in which people all too often follow their selfish ways and questionable agendas. As people of faith, we long for the kingdom of God, in which no

more death and pain are to be found, and in which peace and justice for all creation reign.

Advent is the time of the church year when we focus on waiting: waiting for the birth of Christ on Christmas Day, certainly, but also waiting for the so-called second coming of Christ, when all things will be made new, and the kingdom of God is established among us. And so our waiting is connected with hope: hope that God will turn the world around. This hope is expressed in many hymns of Advent, and in the symbols of the season: the light that shines in the darkness and becomes brighter each week, ‘erst eins, dann zwei, dann drei, dann vier’ (first one, then two, then three, then four), as an old German Advent poem says. We are waiting in hope. But of course, as we all know, there are different ways of waiting: we can be impatient and idle, waiting passively. Or we can do something to bide our time, maybe even in a productive or constructive way.

As we read the Bible, and especially the New Testament Scriptures, we see that waiting for Christ to come is not just a passive and idle time; Jesus admonishes his followers to ‘be watchful’ at all times. And the Apostle Paul has long lists of how we as Christians are to spend our time of waiting: basically in loving our neighbor and doing good by sharing all the gifts and talents we have with the community. ‘Waiting’ and ‘hoping’ are verbs, or ‘Tuworte’, as we still learned in school – ‘doing words’. A verb is what we do. Hoping and waiting thus imply some activity.

And so we can still take clues from Jesus and Paul today how to wait and how to hope: to act on our hope and be part of the change we want to see in this world. To be more loving, more forgiving, more gracious. To be less selfish, resentful or envious. To let our light so shine in a dark world. To bring hope into places that seemingly are hopeless. To reflect the kingdom of heaven in our words and deeds.

This is how we hope. This is how we wait. It's not a waste of time, but time well-spent. It may not be easy, but it is worth the effort, for in the end, all things will be made new, the light of God will shine eternally, and we need not fear anymore.

“Rejoice, rejoice, believers, and let your lights appear;
The evening is advancing, and darker night is near.
The bridegroom is arising and soon is drawing nigh.
Up, pray and watch and wrestle; at midnight comes the cry.”
(From the hymn ‘Rejoice, rejoice, believers’, ELW 244)

In this sense, I wish you a blessed Advent and Christmas season! Hope to see you at St. Matthew's during this time of waiting – and arrival.

Pastor Kerstin Weidmann

Fall Highlights!

Accordion Concert with ‘Concerto Fisarmonica’

On October 8th, German Accordion Youth Orchestra ‘Concerto Fisarmonica’ under the direction of Tobias Mehner gave a lively concert at St. Matthew's. About 20 young musicians played an impressive repertoire of folk, pop, and rock music. An encore of music by the 1920s/1930s German vocal group ‘The Comedian Harmonists’ was enthusiastically received. Overall, ‘Concerto Fisarmonica’ showed a lot of musical skill and passion. There probably wasn't a person who left this concert in dull spirits.



‘Cooking in Katie’s Kitchen’

On October 8th, a small group met at St. Matthew's to explore what ingredients Katherine Luther, wife of Martin, may have had available in her pantry back in the 16th century. Katie Luther ‘herself’ introduced the participants to German foodstuff from that era, and all helped cook a 3 course meal using ingredients like carrots, kale, and fresh berries – but with a California twist. A good time was had by all – and we hope to repeat this event some time during the year 2017, the year of the 500 year anniversary of the Reformation.

Organ Concert ‘With Luther through the Church Year’

Thanks to the fact that power was restored to the Mission neighborhood after a power outage caused by a storm, we were able to enjoy a remarkable organ concert with renowned German organist Roland Voit on Sunday, October 16th. Mr. Voit led us through the church year with compositions based on some of Martin Luther’s hymns. He was able to produce sounds on our newly restored organ that many, if not all people in the audience, had never heard from it. It was a magnificent concert, and we hope to be able to welcome Mr. Voit back for a concert in the summer of 2018.



Visit of Bp. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm at St. Matthew’s

We were honored to welcome Bp. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, President of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) to St. Matthew’s. On September 6th, he first gave an inspiring talk about the 500 year anniversary of the Reformation and how the Reformation still has relevance for our world and time today (please read Michael Willis’ excellent article about the bishop’s talk) as about 70 people were gathered for a ‘Kaffeeklatsch’ (literally ‘coffee gossip’) in St. Matthew’s fellowship hall. We were also honored to have Bp. Mark Holmerud of the Sierra Pacific Synod among our guests.

Following the bishop’s talk, St. Matthew’s newly restored historic organ was rededicated with a festive concert.

Organist Luke Mayernik gave a fantastic performance, showing us all the nuances of our fine instrument. Jack Bethards of the Schoenstein Organ Company gave an entertaining and interesting summary on St. Matthew’s organ and the work that was done this past spring. Bp. Bedford-Strohm blessed the organ, before he and Bp. Mark Holmerud gave a blessing for the assembly.





At the following reception, which was graciously hosted by the German Consulate General of San Francisco and the people of St. Matthew's, special guest Deputy Consul Johannes Bloos addressed the assembly, emphasizing the importance of the tending and the celebration of culture. Those who supported the organ restoration financially were recognized and thanked. A plaque honoring all the donors was presented on that occasion. The organ restoration was financed with major support from the Department of Foreign Affairs of the German government, a generous grant of the Excelsior German Center, Freundschaft Liederkrantz, the family of Sigrid Raub, and many more private donors. Please excuse that I cannot list all of them here, but I hereby want to thank all of them on behalf of St. Matthew's!

There was plenty of opportunity of mingling, meeting our guests of honor and taking selfies during this event. Thanks to all who made it possible! This day was definitely one of the highlights of this year at St. Matthew's.

Both Martin and Katie Luther were present at the Reformation Day service on October 30.



The Damenchor Liederkrantz will perform at their Holiday Concert on December 4 at 3:00 p.m.



December Birthdays

- 1 Bill Bremer
- 2 Lore Sternberg
- 6 Ilse Carnes
Hans Kleinlein
Anneliese Manning
- 7 Edith Schober
- 8 Hansueli Surber
- 13 Elisabeth Lahman



- 15 Norma Hahn
- 19 Jutta Leibrock
- 23 Richard Gutknecht
- 24 Claus Hildebrandt
- 26 Annett Wagner
- 30 Elfriede Werth
- 31 Fred Weidmann

We apologize to any members and friends whose birthdays have been omitted. Please contact the Office if you wish to have your birthday included in future bulletins and newsletters. Thank you.

Article by Michael Willis

*"Der Mond ist
aufgegangen; die
Goldnen Sternlein
Prangen Am Himmel
hell und klar; Der
Wald steht Schwarz
und schweiget; Und
aus den Wiesen
steiget; Der weiße
Nebel wunderbar"*

*--Abendlied by Matthias
Claudius*



Der Mond ist Aufgegangen

6 September 2016, St. Matthew's Church in San Francisco hosted a great talk by an extraordinary man--Bischof Heinrich Bedford-Strohm the Chair of the Evangelical Protestant Church in Germany. He gave a quite uplifting and challenging talk entitled: "Reformation and Freedom". Coming at the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's nailing up of the 95 Theses--the foundation document of the reformation in a Lutheran church would not be remarkable. What was remarkable was the spirit of ecumenism and a reaching out to the Catholic Church. This was a special day. I'll try to capture the sense of his remarks.

"Freedom is of central importance in our world today" and here's why it was important to Martin Luther--he wanted us to think about Inner Freedom and External Freedom. The apostle Paul spoke of justification by faith, not by works. Bedford-Strohm was careful to say that this gift of Grace does not devalue the importance of "works", but that the nature of Grace means that there is nothing we can do to "earn" it. It is a gift, a gift by the grace of God.

The Pauline idea: The taking of the ring from the bride and gives it to the groom (Jesus) who takes all the "garbage"--the sins, and drowns in them, the Jesus gives a ring to the bride which frees her (us) from sin, and then can she (we) feel truly free.

Bedford-Strohm: You have to understand it in your heart. You can make mistakes, but you can start over again. Once again, you do not have to earn it, Jesus has given it to you. The inner freedom must express itself as freedom in the world. By the way, "works" are included. In 1999 this was agreed to by the Catholics.

He quotes Martin Luther by saying: "We should do nothing less than help our neighbor".

HBS has a few directions for us In Today's World:

Have civil courage, not just because authorities want you to; don't separate business and your faith life--you can't stay out of politics; How can all people profit from business deals? Remember: Big thieves hang out with little thieves.

Bedford-Strohm supports sustainability and climate justice goals--think about Ruanda and its struggles to meet those climate goals of a limit of 2% temperature goals--the most industrialized should be fair to small countries like Ruanda which is trying to meet those goals.

And finally, he spoke about his joint Reformation celebration with the Cardinal Reinhard Marx, Archbishop of Munich. On 11 March, they will raise a 3-dimensional X--similar to the barriers along the beaches in WWII, a

symbol of keeping people out, and together raise it and turn it 90 degrees to become a cross +, pointing to Christ, and the responsibility we have to each other, irrespective of our faith. As one of the Catholics in the room, I felt tremendously embraced by this message. Not just a passive recognition of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation and our historic differences, which began by Luther looking at issues that needed to be addressed, and finding common ground in our faith and the work we need to do together. It was gratifying to know that even Pope Francis said those issues needed to be addressed in the Catholic Church.

All good things had to end, and at the reception, Bedford-Strohm posed for pictures, and at some point said that at a joint presentation, they sang Matthias Claudius' Abendlied while sitting next to Chancellor Angela Merkel, who leaned over and told him the 3rd verse was her favorite. In honor of that recognition, when it was my turn, we sang the first verse of the famous German song while we we're having our picture taken:



*Der Mond ist aufgegangen,
Die goldnen Sternlein prangen
Am Himmel hell und klar;
Der Wald steht schwarz und schweiget,
Und aus den Wiesen steigt
Der weiße Nebel wunderbar.*

Take a look at the pictures--we're singing.

Heinrich Bedford-Strohm is a remarkable figure in the world, and I thank Pastor Kerstin Weidmann for bringing him to St Matthew's and the Bay Area.



Message from the Council President

Dear Members and Friends of St. Matthew's,

As this calendar year, which has passed by much too quickly, is rapidly concluding, we find the church now entering the busy season of Advent and looking forward to yet another joyous Christmas. The sanctuary has again been beautifully decorated by the GGMC prior to their 5 upcoming concerts. Now is also the time for me to update you on a few significant recent and future happenings.

Our historic organ has now been officially re-dedicated and two wonderful organ concerts were held. We were very honored to have Bp. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm of the EKD and Bp. Mark Holmerud of the ELCA in attendance at the dedication service. Further planned preventative organ work is to be done by the Schoenstein Co. as their busy schedule permits.

Pr. Kerstin has been busy helping to plan local events concerning next year's 500th Reformation anniversary. In October she attended a Synod conference at Lake Tahoe followed by a DELKINA conference in Toronto. We welcome Rachel Swenson as our new teaching student from the PLTS in Berkeley who will be with us for about 18 months and thank Anja Hiller for her volunteer work and who had to suddenly return to Germany. Also please mark your calendars for the upcoming annual Crab Feed fundraiser to be held on January 28 and the annual congregational meeting on February 12. Other happenings are noted elsewhere in this newsletter.

A very major development of concern to the church is the impending retirement of our longtime church secretary and also recent treasurer, Elizabeth Karp. Her husband is also retiring from his pastoral position and they will be

moving from a too expensive California. Her retirement is certainly earned, deserved and due, but we will miss her cheerful and helpful presence in the office and dedication to St. Matthew's. We wish her all the best in the future. A search for her replacement is now in progress.

The finance committee under Juergen Fehr recently met to plan next year's budget. As has been our recent experience, the church continues to dip into our savings. So as you are planning your holiday giving, remembering the church with a generous Christmas donation would be greatly appreciated.

Wishing you all a wonderful and blessed Advent and Christmas season!

Respectfully submitted,
William H. Bremer, M.D.

Can you help?

Looking for German native speaker to help a family at the beginning of their visit to SF; June 30, 2017.
If you can help, please contact Ruth Rainero, tel: [415 681 0180](tel:4156810180) email: ruth@speakoutskills.com

Mark Your Calendar!

Advent Bible Study – Fling Wide the Door

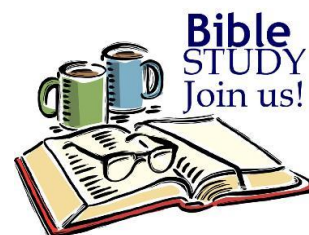
Beloved Advent hymns and their message in our world today

November 29 – 2:30 p.m.

December 6 – 2:30 p.m.

December 13 – 2:30 p.m.

December 20 - 2:30 p.m. Advent Celebration. Bring some cookies!



December 4 – Second Sunday in Advent / St. Nicholas Day

11:00 a.m. – Bilingual Service

A service for the entire family celebrating **St. Nicholas**, patron saint of all children. Potluck meal.

December 4 - 3:00 p.m. – Damenchor Liederkranz Concert

GGMC “Nowell! Nowell!” Concerts

December 8 - 8:00 p.m.

December 10– 3:00 p.m.

December 11 - 3:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m.

December 13 – 8:00 p.m.

December 11 – Third Sunday in Advent

9:30 a.m. – English Service with Holy Communion

11:00 a.m. – German Service with Holy Communion

Musical Guests: **Tactus**

December 17 – Mosaic Concert: A Rose in Snow

8:00 p.m. – St. Matthew's



December 18 – Fourth Sunday in Advent

9:30 a.m. – English Service

11:00 a.m. – German Service

December 24 - Christmas Eve / Heiligabend

4:00 p.m. - Candlelight Service for the entire Family in
German

6:00 p.m. - Reflective Candlelight Service (bilingual)

December 25 – Christmas Day / Weihnachtstag

11:00 a.m. – Bilingual Service with Holy Communion

Musical guests: 'Freundschaft Liederkranz'



January 1, 2017 – First Sunday of Christmas

11:00 a.m. - Bilingual Service

Carols and lessons

January 28, 2017 – 7th Annual Crab Feed

4:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Tickets: \$50/person; \$10/children 6-12

February 12, 2017 – Annual Congregational Meeting

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